

# INNIS HERALD

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NICHOLAS RAY

CRUCIFIXION

COLLAGE

LINGERIE



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PRÉCIS

&c « The prize object of the film is Dean's homosexual admirer, Plato » (p. 2-3).

&c « I find myself feeling it necessary to tout the same advice » (p. 4).

&c « What is the movie that went too far in its infantilization and has proven, once and for all, just how hopeless the summer movie has become? » (p. 6-7).

&c « Hitman is expected to be the first film based on a game that is being distributed by 20th Century Fox, a studio that I deeply admire » (p. 8-9).

&c « They're the same to me, one or another, / A basket of goods is as good as the other » (p. 10).

&c « They are, however, tastefully done and reveal no more than necessary (no nipples or butt cracks to be seen!) » (p. 11).

NOTES

Collage work throughout the issue graciously provided by Liam Crochard. Titles of the pieces, in order of appearance:

Secret Meeting Place, The Soul Escapes, FACTS, Vacation and Island Upon Island.

This issue serves primarily as a telling of the waters for our entirely new layout and its potentially torrid relationship with our printers. Expect all bugs to be exterminated by next month.

The Innis Herald is published during the second full week of each month during the Fall and Winter terms.

All submissions are welcome.



# Nicholas Ray's Gender Project

**NICHOLAS** Ray was an apprentice to architect Frank Lloyd Wright before he left the position and the profession for Hollywood, where he was tutored by Elia Kazan. Connections were made – one glimpses a career's tenacity in making the right connections – and all of his early films succeeded financially – most with bristling critiques of gender.

Ray has been professionally appraised for his untimely depictions of sexual « equivalencies »: the equality of onscreen men and women in the plot and the tone of his movies. For the times that created them, his characters are obviously subversive. The main characters are flamboyant and cunning, powerful because of their very sexual natures.

Over time, Ray's work found cult success and objective support for reasons that are similar but not the same. A lot is made of his bisexuality (was it real or a cover for ho-ho-homosexuality?). Some critics have tried to embed his private life into his public intentions; one is supposed to be devious, and that is supposed to affect the other.

What it is, I think, is that his films seem determined to turn from the expected plot, intuitive traditions and viable techniques of the constraining studio-era genres. They survive now as pretty banal products, but in their time they were anachronistic. Visibly so: the framework of a commercially approved story exists not as a starting point but a point of departure. This deviation is the excitement of each film.

The sentiment powering his work is melodrama. Strange characters take bold actions, and bolder actions taken by other strangers seem to heighten the story and the emotion of the scenes. His characters are lusty types. It is natural for an audience to surmise their turn-ons; often, one sees them openly suggested. The three films I mention – for a particular reason, as they are his boldest – affect these qualities at the height of his success.

## *In a Lonely Place* (1950)

This is the most relevant introduction to Ray's work and, probably, Humphrey Bogart's best movie. Like all his works, there's not much of a performance, but more of him appears here than anywhere else. He plays the worn, inaccessible Dixon

Steele (« Dix » for short; see what you can get from that), a screenwriter in the Hollywood studio era after the war.

One night Dix returns home with a simple and ambitious girl. His invitation for sex is clear. But she's too obtuse, and tires him out just yakking on and on; the camera's imperceptible shift into Steele's point of view even allows us to perceive why she's exasperating – an alienating technique. So she leaves, gets murdered that night, and the plot stirs.

Gloria Grahame, Steele's longer-term love interest, recalls a prude, older Scarlett Johansson. She commands the second and final act of the film after she and Steele get amorous. Their introductory dialogue is volatile and funny; upon their first meeting during an interrogation at police headquarters, Grahame testifies not only to Steele's innocence (they are neighbours) but also to her own attraction for him. Bogart relays his mutual attraction to the lady through a police officer. Together, they charm.

Grahame is manfully complex. Bogart cannot shake the suspicion around him, but he takes his innocence for granted. Grahame does not. As their relationship turns into a marriage, Grahame's shaky background (as made obvious by her tutor/masseur – that one isn't clear) grapples with her own suspicion, closer to our own, that husband-to-be Dix might be guilty after all. The lonely place is hers.

## *Johnny Guitar* (1954)

The title denominates Sterling Hayden's male character, previously Johnny Logan and still, secretly, a quick-draw hot shot. Alas, his phallic pistol has been relinquished for a honky-tonk guitar, holsterless, which travels with him everywhere. He plays a good tune.

*Johnny Guitar* gets the title because it's a firecracker name. But he is a supporting character to the real sun goddess of this film: Vienna, a saloonster in a Western dot-on-the-map town about to be opened up by the railway. For this venture she has been collecting land and making enemies. Johnny and Vienna were once in love. Now that they've met again...

Luckily, the film dramatizes a more captive relationship between Vienna, played by a roughened Joan Crawford, and her antagonist,

Emma, a vocal duststorm and agitator played by Mercedes McCambridge (who was typecast around that time for her anxious Southern spiel). Most interestingly, Emma the bad girl is evil because of her attempt to revolt from her gender. « *She can't stand to feel like a woman* », says Vienna, who is attractive and good because her sex is securely ambivalent.

*Johnny Guitar* is Ray's most colorful, crazy work. Everything in the animated quality of the film, even the color scheme (that's the right word) is subverting the genre. Written under a pseudonym by a blacklisted screenwriter, one wonders, seeing this incredulous film, how it was even authorized; but then, this was Ray's first movie contract with « creative control ».

## *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955)

Wasn't this supposed to be James Dean's seminal performance? That assumption will put one far from the film's performance, and the disjointedness is glaring: the characters live in an undersized (even miniature) setting, the casting is screwy-aged, and the unemotional quality of the piece is halting. The title misleads. James Dean's pseudo-« rebel » Jim is not the most dynamic character.

The prize object of the film is Dean's homosexual admirer, Plato. The nickname – his own invention – is slyly brilliant; after all this is the only on-screen character of any real density. We can only guess at its meanings. Plato is a constant liar and a passionate loner. When James Dean leaves his sight for one moment on the culminating midnight escapade, Plato's volatility engenders real violence. The rest of the fighting we've seen seems lame. Plato is more hardcore – packing heat, as it were. Misfortune lets the film end cruelly: the lusty guy dies, and James Dean introduces his new girlfriend, Natalie Wood, to his parents. They go steady; Plato goes away.

James Dean is watchable enough. His fiery hair and puerile expressions can do nothing but seduce. Unfortunately, the plot disregards the actor, whose sexuality emerges best when masculinity is taken off of him. In *Rebel*, the unabridged « cause » of Dean's rebellion is his lack of a male influence. This problem is said and seen in the film: dad wears kitchen costume, dusts



around the house, cowering. This device is a major weakness on its performance today.

Plato oozes a different kind of sexuality. His hair is oily, his skin olive-colored. When he traduces Natalie Wood about his personal relationship with Jim, whom, he says, he gets to call « *Jamie* » on a one-to-one basis, the film has a real moment. Naturally, his bedroom is pink, the satin sheets – stained? Unlike James Dean and Natalie Wood, who feel at least 25, Plato is cast perfectly for the high school age and explores the drama where others, like Dean and Wood, plod along unemotionally.

Perhaps the creative team behind the film sensed this. They end up devoting an uncanny amount of airtime from the middle to the end of the film developing him. Dean is just an over-aged guy dressed up like a schoolboy. We wait for him to take off his shirt. ■

MATT MALONE





# Rashomon and Seven Samurai

## information



### AKIRA

Kurosawa's *Rashomon* was the first movie to tell the same story multiple times from the viewpoint of different narrators who each produce variations on the same general narrative. The point being: intentionally or unintentionally, everybody distorts their own view of reality. No single narrator is trustworthy. We've seen this concept repeated in many a film, perhaps most recently in Zhang Yimou's *Hero*. In *Rashomon*, the story we hear told and retold is that of a samurai and his wife who encounter a bandit (Toshiro Mifune) while travelling the woods. The bandit sleeps with the wife and in a series of events – each narrator tells these events differently – the samurai is killed. The story is told first by the bandit, then the wife, and even by the dead man, as well as by a seemingly impartial objective observer. None of the stories agree in all the details; each narrator accuses a different person. Yet the lies are not told for the sake of self-preservation: each of the three parties involved accuse themselves.

The concept of the film is fascinating and indeed forces you to question every film you see thereafter, making you wonder who is telling the story, what perspective the camera represents, and to what extent you can trust what you are seeing. The film offers no answers and aims to baffle. Unfortunately, the film doesn't quite work all the time. Kurosawa's admirable philosophical ideas are obscured by sentimental melodrama and characters that do little but annoy. Nevertheless, the scene where the town marshal, the supposed objective observer, marches to the woods where he finds the dead body, is a miraculously beautiful black-and-white sequence that makes wonderful use of natural light and a sleuthing moving camera. The film gets major points for being the first to do this sort of thing; fortunately for today's movies or unfortunately for *Rashomon*'s viewers, its successors do a better job of implementing Kurosawa's brilliant ideas.

For a three-and-a-half-hour film, *Seven Samurai* seems rather short. Much shorter than Peter Jackson's self-indulgent *Lord of the Rings*. In fact, I wouldn't even complain that *Seven Samurai* requires an edit: it remains concise despite its length. *Seven Samurai* is a classic that endures. I've heard it said time and time again, which makes me all the more hesitant to repeat it myself, but it is indubitably a classic. Though the film is over 50 years old, *Seven Samurai* is still better and just as watchable as many a samurai film of today. Kurosawa's star actor, Toshiro Mifune, returns to his usual duties of scratching compulsively and laughing maniacally, over-acting as the ridiculous hero that you're forced to love against your will.

This time, the story is about a small village, threatened by powerful bandits who aim to steal the villagers' food and ravish the village women. The villagers are helpless without some additional external fortitude to come to their aid, so they go off in search of some samurai to help them in their mission. Since they have no rewards to offer but menial foods, the only samurai they can attract are truly hungry samurai that astonishingly support their cause. And so they gather a gang of seven misfit samurai, one of whom (Toshiro Mifune) does not even have proper samurai training; he simply believes himself to be a samurai which is apparently close enough to the real thing, despite his many follies. The film takes us through the selection of the samurai, the training of the villagers, the fear and loathing of the villains, and of course, the ultimate showdown.

*Seven Samurai* is a samurai film that has the courage to take its time and tell a story. We meet real characters, albeit exaggerated versions, and we grow to care for them, even if our modern-day-sensibilities occasionally causes us to laugh at them. The ultimate battle is one of the most epic and truly gorgeous fighting scenes I've ever seen on film, and fought on a backdrop of rain, becomes evermore emotionally engaging. While the violence in Bogart movies do not stand the test of time because the action is too slow and too obviously fake, Kurosawa's action would be just as acceptable in a film made today as it was at the time. In fact, *Seven Samurai* has better shot action than much of what you see today. I remember seeing a copy of the DVD in Bay Street Video with a little staff recommendation sticky attached to it stating, « I know it's long, but it's a classic. Make time! ». At the time, I felt it almost patronizing, but I find myself feeling it necessary to tout the same advice. *Seven Samurai* is a rare film that truly earns its place as a classic. ■

ALEXANDRA HEENEY







# The Crucifixion of Michael Bay

**BEFORE** I signed off from the *Herald* for the summer holidays, I was looking forward to the slew of summer movies that would offer relaxing, uncomplicated entertainment during my four month stretch of leisure and laziness. I even went so far as to write an article defending Michael Bay and his skill at making such entertainments, highlighting *Armageddon* as his greatest achievement. However, my open-mindedness gradually changed to cynicism and disgust as the theatres yielded a series of disappointing, lack-luster movies. The previous summer, I had been pleasantly surprised by such amusements as *Superman Returns*, *The Da Vinci Code* and *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest*, accepting them for what they were: light-hearted excursions into escapism and adventure. This year, however, I found myself in a rather different mindset, and my enthusiasm for the summer movie season gradually evaporated into nothing. I think the reason why I was in this slump had to do with both the diminishing quality of these movies (*Spider-Man 3* anyone?) and my refusal to comply to the condition of « *leaving my brain at the door* » when watching these movies. After all, why should audiences have to stoop to the level of these blockbusters in order to enjoy them? Why can't these movies, instead, rise to the audience's level? Of course, while these movies are designed for simple and easy digestion, it is possible for them to overdo it in this respect, degrading to a point where it is simply impossible for the average moviegoer to submit themselves to escapism or even comprehend what the hell is going on. The result is that they lose their sense of fun, and they turn into loud, flashy on-screen messes that flicker and spit obnoxiously at the viewers for 2 1/2 hours that they will never get back and always regret losing. So, what is the movie that went too far in its infantilization and has proven, once and for all, just how hopeless the summer movie has become? As if you had to ask: Michael Bay's *Transformers*, of course.

After having seen *Transformers*, I can say with full confidence that it represents everything I hate about contemporary American cinema, and has certified Michael Bay's position as the Antichrist of film. I won't take back my statements in the previous article about the man being a skilled wizard of the action genre, but such a talent can only take him so far, and it would appear that they reached their peak with *Armageddon*. I believe the main reason *Armageddon* worked was its sense of balance. While the giant asteroid threatening mankind is what the movie's about, the spotlight never leaves the oil driller characters led by Bruce Willis who are dispatched by NASA to blow up said space rock. They are a charismatic, funny bunch who are easy to root for (especially to a crowded theatre full of easy-going, adventure-seeking movie-goers), and that is why the movie never

feels as absurd as it really is. A truly good director can take the most bizarre, unlikely story and, using the right style, can accomplish cinematic wonders. Hitchcock did it with *Vertigo*, and Bay, in his own way, did it with *Armageddon*. But many years have passed since that film, and as we cut to 2007, Bay's high-octane antics have collapsed on themselves in a shameless, mind-numbing, spirit-crushing display of light and sound that lack the remotest possibility of any decent concept, story or characters for the audience to latch onto (at least one of which, believe it or not, being absolutely necessary for any good action movie to work properly).

Is *Transformers* really that bad? I hate to be the one to say this (or do I?), but yes. *Transformers* is the big one: a glaring reminder that cinema has dropped to an all-time low. Watching it, you get the sense that this is what it must be like to abuse an art form – not misuse it, but abuse it, actually causing it bodily harm. Watching it, I thought of Pauline Kael and why she left film criticism, or Jean-Luc Godard and his statement that the time when cinema could have aided society has come and gone. *Transformers* is all of their worst nightmares made celluloid flesh.

As I write this article, I am perfectly aware of the kind of movie *Transformers* is (and unapologetically announces itself to be). Like *Star Wars* (the film that, along with *Jaws*, started the entire popcorn movie phenomenon), it is, for all intents and purposes, a children's movie designed for simple entertainment and very little else. Its target audience is of the twelve year-old variety, and its release was accompanied by a slew of tie-in toys, books, magazines, comics and countless other products also largely aimed at twelve year-old kids. But the tragedy of it all is the fan base that movies like *Transformers* attracts, regardless of the intended age group. *Transformers* was, after all, touted to be the main attraction of this summer's movie season. For all the popcorn-munching, thrill-seeking audiences out there, young and old alike, this was supposed to be the absolute apex of it all, the one that would have the biggest payoff and deliver the most satisfaction. But after watching this atrocious mess of a movie, all I could think was, « *So, this was supposed to be the high point of summer movies this year? Hurm* ».

It should have been so simple. When I walked (was driven, actually, as I saw it at a drive-in) into the theatre, I only wanted one thing from *Transformers*: a jaw-dropping distraction from the real world in the form of giant robots beating the shit out of each other. This was something that Bay should have been able to pull off no problem. No such luck: the special effects sequences that should have made up the majority of the film didn't happen nearly as often as they should have. Instead, the audience was fed heap upon heap of unnecessary plot points

and story content involving the human characters. For a movie called *Transformers*, they could have at least included a few more scenes with the actual robots instead of trying to add a « *human element* » to a movie that they knew (or damn well should have known) people would have only gone to see for the *Transformers*. Yet even then, this was a movie with scarcely anything going for it. It had terrible, paper-thin characters that spouted ridiculous dialogue, an endless parade of lame jokes and product placements and special effects sequences so overdone that they degraded into a mindless, blinding assault on the audience's eyes and ears. Plus, it's just plain embarrassing. Michael Bay is one of Hollywood's biggest « *boys* » (a position he shares with Robert Rodriguez and Quentin Tarantino), cramming his movies with as many of his juvenile fantasies as possible – mainly big, loud explosions, shiny, action-ready vehicles and impossibly attractive yet painfully one-dimensional female characters. The hulking, corny line-spewing robots of *Transformers* are just about as bad as the overly macho Spartan warriors of *300* or the growling, trenchcoat-clad caricatures of *Sin City*.

Steven Spielberg was never this moronic. On the contrary, even though he and George Lucas are to blame for the blockbuster mentality of the film industry, he is still a most skilled storyteller who makes (and asks the audience to make) an emotional investment in his characters and stories that is almost always paid back in full. With Spielberg, you always get something back from his films – if nothing else, a good, well-told yarn. *Transformers* didn't even make an attempt at such a thing, thus becoming only a loud, stupid, noisy light show. And the fact that Spielberg helped pay for it (he is credited as one of the movie's executive producers) seems more like the punch line for a sick joke than anything else.

The genuinely insulting thing about this movie, though, was that there wasn't even the smallest mote of intelligent subject matter. *Transformers* is infantile, obnoxious and terrible, but worst of all, it's empty. It holds no confidence whatsoever in the mental capabilities of its audience, and it doesn't pretend to either. It is the crudest attempt at entertainment, one where I strongly suspect the filmmakers leaned heavily on the hope that the viewers would « *switch off their brains* » in order to fully enjoy the movie. The worst part of it all is that too many films made these days depend on that factor more and more. Many filmmakers no longer seek to challenge their audiences or make them think about something in a different way (which, one could argue, is one of the reasons why cinema exists). Even the simple art of entertainment has become too much of a careless one, filmmakers relying too much on the safety and comfort of franchises, remakes and sequels to sufficiently challenge themselves or their audiences.





Which brings me to a film I discovered this summer that was infinitely more challenging and satisfying than Bay's monstrosity: Andrei Tarkovsky's 1972 film *Solaris*. *Solaris* is the extreme opposite of *Transformers*, belonging to a different breed of science fiction film altogether. It follows a psychologist named Kris Kelvin as he investigates the mysterious goings-on at a remote space station. Moving at its own pace, the film is slow and meditative, asking the viewer to consider the nature of human consciousness along with Kelvin. Atmosphere is everything in the film, created by the eerie, ambient soundtrack and the carefully chosen visuals that richly illuminate every moment of the film. It is the epitome of high art, and, quite simply, everything that *Transformers* is not. Now, this is not to say that the summer season's crop of light, entertaining popcorn movies should be replaced by long, slow art films, but the point of this unlikely comparison is that Tarkovsky's film resonates with more honesty than any of Bay's films and most of this year's summer movies ever will. With *Solaris*, you feel how genuine Tarkovsky was in his expression, how every shot was carefully chosen by the filmmaker for the benefit of the film and its audience. In short, you never get the sense that Tarkovsky was cheapening himself or his film for the sake of simplicity or easy ticket sales, and this is the reason why *Solaris* provided such a rich and rewarding viewing experience while most of this year's summer movies did not. If popcorn filmmakers were to inherit even a small fraction of this kind of sensibility, then perhaps they'd



make movies that satisfy as well as entertain their audiences while maintaining some dignity for themselves and their work. Or, to use a food analogy: these filmmakers may only be the hamburger chefs of cinema, but they could aspire to make films more like the wholesome Homeburgers of Lick's than the greasy, excrement-laced servings of McDonald's.

Despite the rather negative tone of this article, I still have genuine hope for the future of cinema. While the movie-going public has been recently punished by such tripe as *Evan Almighty*, *License to Wed* and *I Now Pronounce You Chuck and Larry*, it has also been rewarded with exciting films like *Little Miss Sunshine*, *Pan's Labyrinth*, *Children of Men*, *Babel*, *The Fountain* and David Lynch's *INLAND EMPIRE*. Plus, there are still many promising films on the horizon, including Gus Van Sant's *Paranoid Park*, Paul Thomas Anderson's *There Will Be Blood*, Noah Baumbach's *Margot at the Wedding* and Wes Anderson's *The Darjeeling Limited*. In the meantime, there's no choice but to cope with the sun-baked cinematic wasteland that summer has become, and hope that one day Michael Bay will either burn out in a brilliant mushroom cloud of catastrophic failure (if it's even possible to top *Transformers*), quietly fade away into obscurity (ha-ha) or suddenly realize the damage he's done to the medium and surrender himself to the film-going community for his proper punishment (which would ideally be that used as the title of this essay).

MARC SAINT-CYR

## - ANNOUNCEMENT -

CityStudent.ca is a helpful student resource site that is launching this month. Think Toronto.com for students. The site will focus on many aspects of student living but will focus on the social and academic part of student life specifically. Students will be able to read and write articles, review restaurants and events, check out a vast monthly calendar of events as well as find very helpful academic resources. They have a bold goal of placing a resource of past exams to help make first and second year students lives a little easier. CityStudent will be offering scholarships to a couple lucky students interested in writing full time for them. CityStudent is kicking everything off with a party at The Drink inside the Government on September 28th. They want to work with as many student groups as possible to help them raise money for their cause/group. This is a graffiti party so a white t-shirt and marker are handed to each student when they walk in the door. Tickets will be \$10 and each student group gets to keep \$8 of every ticket sold. This money can go to anything the group sees fit. Contact Billy@citystudent.ca or Matt@citystudent.ca if you are interested in getting involved or attending the upcoming Launch party on September 28th. Please visit [www.citystudent.ca](http://www.citystudent.ca) for your up-to-date information on student life.





# Hitman Hits the Big Screen

THOSE of us who are knowledgeable in the field of « interactive entertainment » should already be familiar with the *Hitman* series of computer and video games, which dawned with the release of *Hitman: Codename 47* for the PC platform in 2000 and, so far, encompasses three sequels. The playable character (i.e. the « hitman ») in the games is Agent 47. He's a chilly, bald assassin who sports a barcode on the back of his head as well as a duo of handguns (in addition to a sniper rifle, shotgun, knife, or anything else he can find and use to kill his targets). Agent 47 carries out contract killings for a mysterious group known as « The Agency » and must complete them as discreetly as possible (or not), often dressing in various disguises. His targets vary, but are often mob bosses or military figures. And now the film industry has lured this masterful game series into its lair.

*Hitman*, to be released by 20th Century Fox on October 12th, will showcase the latest attempt to adapt a game into a film. Previous endeavors to do so have virtually all been unsuccessful (critically and often commercially too). One may recall *Super Mario Bros.*, the film that initiated this entire process over a decade ago but ended in both commercial and critical failure and deserves little more than this brief mention in a student newspaper. How worthy *Hitman* will be as a film is an outcome to be decided by critics and audiences. Meanwhile, its quality as an adaptation will be assessed by gamers, some of whom already exercise pessimism about it.

In the film adaptation of *Hitman*, Agent 47 will be portrayed by Timothy Olyphant, who most recently starred in *Lite Free or Die Hard* (note that Olyphant's lack of hair as Agent 47 provides him with greater resemblance to Bruce Willis). It is difficult to predict how Olyphant will do as Agent 47. There is little acting that one could adapt from a game (unless you use the game's cinematic sequences as a foundation). He will certainly make Agent 47 more « human » despite hurting the image of the hitman that fans of the game have become accustomed to. Although he turns 40 next year, I would argue that baby-faced Olyphant looks too young to play Agent 47.

Nevertheless, Olyphant is still a far better choice than bulky Vin Diesel, who was initially cast for the part. One could claim that Jason Statham, who supposedly turned down the role, would have depicted a more authentic Agent 47. Many *Hitman* fans even called for actor David Bateson (whose voice and appearance were used for Agent 47 in the games) to be cast. Even a « David Bateson as 47 » online petition emerged. The filmmakers probably deemed Bateson too unknown to serve as the star of a major motion picture. Yet there was even a joke floating around to pitch Patrick Stewart for the role of Agent 47! Although the trailer for *Hitman* has given me mixed feelings about Olyphant, I'll wait for the actual film before I form any judgments.

As for the other actors in *Hitman*, there are few (if any) high profile ones. Dougray Scott, who I mainly know as the villain from *Mission Impossible II*, will star opposite Olyphant (although having acted alongside Tom Cruise is unlikely to help him in *Hitman*). One member of *Hitman*'s cast who caught my eye was Ulrich Thomsen. Students who have recently taken the Intro to Film Studies course here at U of T may remember him as the actor who played Christian in *Festen*. I believe this is merely a nod to Denmark since the *Hitman* games were developed by a Danish company, IO Interactive. Yet students should also note that *Hitman* has as much to do with Dognma 95 as Atom Egoyan has to do with action-packed blockbusters.

One of *Hitman*'s producers is Luc Besson, who directed *Leon: The Professional*, the mother of all hitman stories and a key inspiration for the *Hitman* games themselves. The perplexing irony of it all is that Monsieur Besson is producing a film based on a game that was inspired by a film he once made. As great (and unlikely) as it would have been for Luc Besson to direct the *Hitman* film, the actual director is another Frenchman by the name of Xavier Gens (contrary to belief, this is not the name of any video game character). *Hitman* will be the first feature film released under the direction of Gens (excluding Frontière(s), which is currently being showcased at various film festivals and sched-

uled for a January release in France).

Gens' relatively empty record in feature filmmaking could benefit him in a certain way but his inexperience could also hurt the production. There is no knowing what he can or will do with *Hitman*. He may prove to be an innovative and talented filmmaker. Or, as a rookie, he may fall victim to naïve tendencies (such as the all-explosions-and-no-depth technique). Yet, one may ask, how much depth can a film based on a game seriously have? Well, it depends. For a game, *Hitman* did have considerable psychological depth (yes, the question of why Agent 47 kills haunted gamers endlessly and drove them into a state of self-questioning). Most importantly, I am satisfied that *Hitman*'s director is not Uwe Boll, the German boxer-turned-director and modern-day Ed Wood who releases one horrible film after another (most based on games) and manages to do so only by exploiting tax incentives in his native country.

However, *Hitman*'s screenwriter, Skip Woods, already has two feature films under his belt and the most notable of which is *Swordfish*. I found *Swordfish* to be relatively awkward and uninspiring. It was as if someone made a badass version of *The Net*, replaced Sandra Bullock with Hugh Jackman, and added a fill *Pulp Fiction*-ed John Travolta. I admit that I'll be disappointed if *Hitman* bears any stylistic resemblance to *Swordfish*. Hopefully, Woods has not underestimated the importance of screenwriting in the process of adapting a game into a film. If a game is adapted poorly (where continuous killing is emphasized over a well-constructed storyline) then the film is doomed. I expect this will not be the case for *Hitman* and, by the looks of the trailer, movie-goers may actually be treated to an equal balance of bloody slayings and an appealing plot.

In the spirit of *Batman Begins* and *Casino Royale*, we will also see the « birth » of Agent 47 in *Hitman* (indicated by a shot, in the trailer, of Agent 47 getting the barcode planted on his head). My only worry is that *Hitman* won't feature Agent 47 in disguise (at least not enough). In the trailer, he's always wearing the suit with red tie! But, in the games, he often wears disguises (to move around locations easi-







ly) that range from a delivery boy outfit to a Santa Claus costume.

*Hitman* is expected to be the first film based on a game that is being distributed by 20th Century Fox, a studio that I deeply admire and one that has brought us such classics as *Star Wars*, *Alien*, and *Die Hard*. Apparently, most other studios have already distributed at least one film based on a game: *Mortal Kombat* (New Line); *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within* (Columbia); *Resident Evil* (Sony); *Tomb Raider* (Paramount); *Doom* (Universal). It seems as if there is some secret, wild competition happening between the studios to release the first commercially and critically successful film based on a game. As is the case for every Hollywood film, 20th Century Fox primarily hopes that *Hitman* will turn up a profit in ticket sales. Although I am no top-notch analyst, I do have a hunch that *Hitman* could reach #1 at the box office. The reason for this claim is because *Hitman* does not face serious competition with the other films opening on October 12th, which include a sequel to a biopic (*Elizabeth: The Golden Age*), a seemingly pathetic indie film (*Lars and the Real Girl*), two other films whose hype is limited (*We Own the Night* and *Michael Clayton*), and not much fierce competition from previous weeks (*The Heartbreak Kid* and *The Seeker: The Dark Is Rising*). Of course, many of those films have immense star power (Cate Blanchett, Clive Owen, Joaquin Phoenix, Mark Wahlberg, George Clooney, and Ben Stiller to name a few), which *Hitman* obviously does not have. If the weekend goes to star power, then *Hitman* may flop. Yet if the 17-25 male gaming audience

flocks to theatres, then *Hitman* stands a good chance of shooting, smashing, and strangling its competitors at the box office.

*Hitman* will definitely *not* yield the intense degree of hopelessness exhibited by most films based on games (to understand what I mean by this, please consult *Super Mario Bros.*, *Doom*, or anything by Uwe Boll). I believe this rests in the sheer nature of the original games (that actually complement killing with thinking), but also in minor factors such as the presence of Luc Besson as producer or the freshness of the director and leading actor. Unfortunately, I doubt *Hitman* will be the breakthrough that gamers hope for and filmmakers strive for. There is always a substantial level of anticipation every time a game is turned into a motion picture, fueled by a dream that someday the mediums of cinematic and interactive entertainment may connect in a manner that would allow games to be adapted to the big screen as effectively as books have been. *Hitman* is unlikely to set that milestone. Nevertheless, it will be one step forward from the measly game-to-film adaptations of the past. Furthermore, it will surely provide reliable entertainment that should satisfy the core demand of movie-goers. ■

TOM LATKOWSKI





# 7 Poems by an Economics Student

## *What is Supply and Demand?*

What is supply and demand?  
They are the treats of a voluptuous mother,  
Great, gorgeous mounds that feed two suckling babes:  
The worker and the capitalist.  
Oftentimes they bicker and poke at each other's eyes,  
But eventually are picked up and held aloft again,  
By the invisible hand or the iron fist.

## *Japanese Businessmen*

At the empty sashimi bar, over a cup of rice wine,  
The chief lamentations of the Japanese businessmen.  
In the beef bowl still, the proprietor calls,  
His regulars! The grey office clerks!  
But no one answers!  
Not at the restaurant,  
Not at the karaoke bar  
Not at the wrestling stadium,  
Nor at the baseball park

The flood of sake at the team drink is nowhere to be seen.  
Neither the stripper nor the Geisha has work this evening.  
Oh where are those middle aged shintos?  
Are they in conquest in Europe or America?  
Are they surveying their properties in offices and factories?  
Are they in fierce bartering in central bureaucracies?

But look! There they are! Look in the little house in the countryside  
Or in the cramped apartment, where they reside  
Look at the figures of parents, wife and children  
They huddle now with the Japanese businessmen!

He sits with a tired shoulder sagging with dignified effort  
As a tired beast of burden, as if an air has gone out of him  
After a great beating; but to the last, he's still one of the great salarymen.

Or maybe the children are not there, there's always the wife and parents  
Or if the his parents have gone, there's always his wife  
Or if they are all vanished from the scene, there's usually a noose to be seen  
But regardless! Look at how they hug him!

## *They say the World is Flat*

They say the world is flat,  
But I swear, I thought the earth was round.  
Cause then I'm on the wrong side of the world,  
And if it's true, I'd fall off the ground.

They say the world is flat,  
But I swear, my side is always the afternoon.  
Whether I've got the sun on my back,  
Or falling down besides the moon.  
They say the world is flat,  
And it's probably true when I'm falling down.  
Don't know where my globe has gone,  
Nothing I use is made in town.

They say the world is flat,  
As certain as up is up, and down is down.  
And it might all be true,  
There's nothing here anymore to keep me around.

They say the world is flat,  
But it's not, because of us.  
Cause the earth is round, and if we fall fast enough,  
We go around and around in orbit, and then we're gone.

## *Inflation*

The prices of onions have gone up today  
By a few cents, no more, than the day before  
But tomorrow, you can be sure  
Like the sun, it will slowly rise

Slowly, moving always inches  
Till it is at last hangy in the midday sky  
Beating down the masses below  
Till all the coin is spent  
Making the workman sweat  
And the little'uns cry

Their savings, like water, dry up  
In a few days, there's no more to sup  
But somehow, you can be sure  
Like the sun, they will slowly rise

Slowly, like a huddled mass  
They go to work, they toil  
And in the heat of day they boil  
Till the end of the day  
They get their pay  
Then they go home to pray, or starve in the soil.

From there they rise again  
And go down again,  
Or they go out in the streets  
With empty stomachs or empty pockets  
Begging, fighting for a grain  
But you can be sure, as they come and go  
The price of onions will go up tomorrow.

## *The Wage and Unemployment Curve*

A rolling field unfolds, its contours wide  
An axis to the bottom, and axis to the right

On one dimension lies livelihood! The wage divided by price  
On the other marks ruin! Unemployment, idleness, and vice!

Behold! Capital forms its force upon the field!  
Its armour arrayed in a straight line!  
The number of their platoon,  
Their colour of their company  
Shiningly displayed: One plus Mu!  
Held high up on banners many.

And on the opposing field labour lines its battalion!  
Ranks up closed ranks, curved, with horse at its flanks  
Their force paid in wages multiplied by expected prices

And lo! Look upon the marching foes!  
In their eternal clash, unceasingly matched!  
At their centre, only one result is certain!  
Where industry stops, unemployment begins!  
Where vice meets business, where idleness meets greed  
There, only there in the clash and din,  
May good men succeed, or their works concede!

## *The Price of Gas*

A little bit of gas can get you a long way,  
Like coffee on the start of day.  
Except most of the time gas is cheaper,  
Since between you and your car, you're still a bigger drinker.

But not to worry, the price of gas is going up,  
So now and then you'll drink fewer cups.  
Of course, your car will still slurp the same,  
As when your gas was cheaper than your coffee came.

## *Indifference Theory*

3 barrels of gas and a can of poutine,  
A bottle of wine and 5 sardines,  
I can't choose between'em, it's all the same to me

6 bags of tatters and a sack of beans,  
4 box of chocolates and a rum canteen,  
Between'em, I'm indifferent, Mon Ami

They're the same to me, one or another,  
A basket of goods is as good as the other,  
But man oh man, they aren't free

So what I can actually afford is this:  
A loaf of bread and some water,  
So won't you come sit, and share it with me?

ERIC ZHANG





# Holy Crap

## IT WAS

a quiet summer's day in a small retail shop when two bored employees embarked on a fierce theological debate.

« If God created man in his perfect image, how can so many Christians justify their hatred of gays? »

« Well, there's GOD, replied her coworker, and then there's SATAN. And Satan is the one who created homosexuals. »

And lo, on the fifth day, Satan intervened, and it was bad. Wait, I don't remember the Bible saying that...

What shocked me most about this outlandish claim wasn't its homophobia, its baseless absurdity, or the fact that the three of us were working in a decidedly non-conservative, sexy lingerie boutique. What really made my jaw drop was the realization that this ludicrous statement came from someone my age, from my city – not from some balding, pot-bellied, Bible-thumping, Bush-loving US southerner.

Within minutes of meeting Mary, I could tell that her addition to the shop would make my job far more interesting (and more frustrating) than usual. Upon learning that I had a boyfriend, she promptly inquired about our marriage plans. Taken aback, I avoided her question by laughing it off. For this I earned a stern glare and a lengthy story about how she and Joe would already be married, if only they had the money. All of their friends from church, she informed me with a glint of envy, had already been married for a year or two.

« How old were they when they got married, then? » I asked her.

« Twenty, twenty-one... » she casually replied.

What the hell?

She then continued to explain how she and Joe could never be torn apart, even though her trip to ministry school in the fall would separate them for months. « Jesus chose him for me », she said matter-of-factly. By this point, I was ready for a breather. I suggested that she take her lunch break so I could have half an hour to digest the big plate of crazy she had just served up. She spent her lunch break sitting outside the shop, reading a book about « Learning to Forgive through God ».

I tried to be open-minded and accepting of my new coworker's faith. It might not be for everyone, but maybe it worked for her. Try as I might, though, I couldn't get around her extreme conservatism. After her «

Satan created gays » assertion, she lost all credibility in my books. My other coworkers found her equally bizarre, and even some customers found her unsettling. One woman, signing her Visabill, chatted about how she wished she had kept her maiden name, as it was so difficult to get it back after her rough divorce. Mary piped up from across the room, « I'm taking Joe's name. It's the right thing to do. I've known him for five years and we're going to be happy together, our marriage wouldn't fail. I know him too well ». Because everyone expects a little righteousness with their lingerie, don't they?

In addition to the offensive, bigoted quips Mary delivered every so often, she came out with some amusing opinions sometimes. For instance, she told me that she wanted to do missionary work and proselytize where it was really needed, « like Ecuador, or Texas ». Surely it's tough to spread conservative Christianity in Texas.

She also told me that, when she arrives in heaven, she would rather tickle Jesus than kiss his feet. Unsure of how to reply, I made a joke. « That would be a good doll. Tickle-Me-Jesus ».

Her smile fell. « That's extremely sacrilegious ».

« Or extremely hilarious », I replied.

The jokes of heathens were not the only things Mary took offense to. When she peered into the window of a nearby clothing shop that carried the brand G-Sus, she was utterly horrified. « Anyone who wears that brand must have a lot of hate in their heart for the Lord », she exclaimed.

Naturally, working in a lingerie boutique, the topic of sex was bound to come up eventually. Mary took issue with some of the posters displaying the store's products. The pictures, of course, depict women in lingerie; they are, however, tastefully done and reveal no more than necessary (no nipples or butt cracks to be seen!). She even confronted the boss with her concern that some of the posters made women out to be the objects of male sexual fantasies, a concern that was quickly dismissed since – hello – it's a lingerie shop. I began to wonder how she felt about sexuality. Did she really think that women didn't want to look tantalizing in their skivvies? Should they purposely wear unattractive undergarments to ward off the perverted desires of their boyfriends and husbands?

A more brazen, straightforward

ward coworker decided to get straight to the point. « Mary, do you and Joe have sex? » she asked bluntly. I pretended to be deeply absorbed by the XXXLs I was folding into a tiny square.

She hesitated before replying: « We've done it a few times, she admitted with a hint of distaste, but I always repent a lot afterwards and we really try not to do it again ».

My other coworker, understandably intrigued, continued to pry. « So does God forgive you if you repent? » she asked.

« If you truly mean it, Mary explained, then God will purify you ».

« Wait... so... you're like a virgin again? » Madonna plays in my head.

« Exactly ».

« Hold on... does this mean I could go around having dirty, promiscuous sex with whoever I wanted, then repent and have a white wedding? »

Mary bites her lip. « Um... you have to mean it though ».

« But what if I did? What if I truly regretted all those wild nights? »

« I... I guess... yes. You could be a virgin again ».

How convenient.

Working with Mary opened my eyes to a world of conservative Christianity that exists right here in our own city. I had never stopped to consider it before, assuming that evangelicalism was an American phenomenon. Yet even the controversial 2006 documentary *Jesus Camp* took place closer than one might have expected, in North Dakota. This summer, Ontario even had its own fundamentalist scandal, only a few hours outside of Toronto. Only weeks ago in Brockville, Grenville Christian College closed its doors amid accusations of cult practices that scared its students. Hopefully, Mary's upcoming schooling experience will be less extreme than that of Grenville's students. As much as she annoyed me, I wouldn't want her taken to a dark room and grilled by staff members about her sins, or left in the boiler room to get a taste of hell's flames.

Another thing that Mary did that irritated me at work: she farted a lot. Although I guess if she repented afterwards, it's as if the smell was never there at all. ☹

CHRISTINE  
CREIGHTON

